

Baptism Service - The Church's Children and Parents

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[0 : 00] Now will you turn with me to the passage that we read in Ephesians, and for a few moments we'll read again from the beginning of chapter 6. Paul's letter to the Ephesians, chapter 6 at the beginning.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, this is the first commandment, with a promise, that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land.

And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Now when we consider that Paul begins this letter that he is sending on to what he describes as the saints who are in Ephesus, he addresses this letter to the saints who are in Ephesus.

That means this congregation of God's people in Ephesus, he wrote this letter to them. And it's significant when you take account of that, and that description, that he is including in that these children, that he is now addressing in chapter 6, children, obey your parents in the Lord.

In other words, Paul didn't regard the children of that church in Ephesus as somehow loosely attached to that congregation, and not actually in any visible sense of membership of it.

[1 : 25] He is addressing them here directly themselves as part of that congregation, meaningfully part of that congregation. And it's something that we always seek to emphasize and to try and put across in preaching the gospel, that our children, as covenant children, our children brought up in the church, baptized children into the visible church, that they are indeed part of, already part of the church, and have that membership by baptism that we can call a confederate membership, in contrast to a communicant membership, which we pray will indeed take place later on in their life.

And it's significant, therefore, that there are quite a number of children here today in this congregation who are here worshiping God with parents or grandparents or friends, because these words are addressed to you as children, as we read the first part of this passage in verses 1 and 3, 1 to 3.

And then it addresses the fathers who are regarded by the apostle, in keeping with the rest of Scripture, as having a leadership in the family and responsibilities, therefore, that are incumbent upon them as leaders within the relationship of marriage and within the parenthood that belongs to them along with wives.

And that is the second part of the passage that we're going to look at later on. So here is, first of all, an argument towards the children, and secondly, an argument towards the parents or towards the fathers in particular.

But there are three arguments, really, in the passage that we can see Paul is setting out for us. First of all, there's an argument from God's norm.

[3 : 12] A norm is something which is established as a standard to which people are advised or counseled to correspond. And in this case, we're talking about God's norm.

God has a norm. God has a standard which he applies to us as individuals, which he applies to marriages, which he applies to families. And we're saying here that here is an argument from God's norm because that's, in the words, this is right.

Obey your parents, children, and the Lord, for this is right. This is according to God's standard, God's norm, God's established norm. Second argument is an argument from God's law and his promise.

Where he says this is the first commandment with a promise. He's talking there of the fifth commandment, which speaks of honoring your father and mother. This is the first commandment, he says, with a promise.

So there's an argument there, secondly, from God's law and a promise attached to it. And thirdly, there's an argument, especially when we come to look at the words, in the Lord, and then as he speaks to the fathers, bring them up in the nurture or discipline and instruction of the Lord.

[4 : 30] In the Lord, of the Lord. There's an argument from God's grace. Because as that is established in Christ, as that is seen to be in Christ, as Christ is central to the way God's grace has brought us salvation, well, here's an argument from God's grace to live Christ-centered lives, and especially for parents to be nurturing parents, parents who nurture their children in the instruction, the discipline and instruction of the Lord, centered on, founded on Christ himself, the grace of God.

An argument from God's norm then, first of all. He's saying here to children, Obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. And when he says, This is right, he doesn't just mean, This is the right thing to do.

This is the correct thing to do. That's obviously part of it. That's part of the meaning of, This is right. It is the right thing to do. But it's wider than that. It's a thing that goes deeper than that.

And when he says, This is right, He means this is righteous. This is in accordance with God's standard. This is what God himself has laid down for us. As children, we are to obey our parents in the Lord.

Of course, that presupposes that our parents are bringing us up in the nurture and instruction of the Lord. And where that is the case, what he's saying is, Children, Obey your parents in the Lord.

[6 : 02] For this is right. It accords with what God has established. Now it is important, before we go further, that we see that God's norm is something that applies to other parts of the family and family life as well.

That's why you find in this passage itself, that God is addressing through the apostle, wives, husbands, families in that sense, and now moves to children and then moves on in those days to those who are slaves or servants within the home as well.

He says this is right, because this is all part of God's created order. This is how God established things at the beginning, after he had created human life, after he had created the relationship of marriage, after he had created that setting for family life.

This is right. This is God's norm. This is God's norm for children. This is God's norm for the family. This is God's norm for family relationship. So he's teaching us here, and this is something for the children to take on board especially.

When the Bible is saying to us here that this is right, this is God's norm to obey your parents, he's really saying that obeying our parents arises out of our love for God's standard.

[7 : 24] It's not simply our love for them as parents, though of course that's important, but our love for God's standard, for what God has established, for what God himself has set for us, for God's norm.

It's that love for him and for his standard that leads to our love for one another, whether it's as parents to children, children to parents, husbands to wives, wives to family, or even out with that our love for other people.

It's God's norm and a love for God's norm. In other words, today when we're seeking to obey your parents, when you seek to obey your parents, when you seek to live by that standard, you're doing so because that is what God expects of you, because that is what God has done.

And when you move away from God's norm, whether it's in terms of children to parents, or parents to each other, or ourselves in relation to society at large, moving away from any of God's norms that he has set, will always be damaging for us.

Will always bring something negative, something that's destructive to some extent, into our experience, into our life. And that, of course, is true of the family as well, because when you look at the Bible, when you find here and elsewhere, going right back into Old Testament times, as we say, right to creation, you'll find that the family unit, as a unit, is set as the basic, or the central unit in society.

[8 : 59] It's the core unit in society. And there's a reason for us mentioning that, not just because it's in the Bible, but because it is very largely attacked, nowadays, in our own society.

Of course, there are exceptions to family life, in the sense in which singleness is mentioned in the Bible. Those who are not married, those who end up not married, throughout the whole course of life.

It's an exception to marriage, but it has its own norm. God has established his norm for singleness, just as he has for the marriage relationship.

And the norm for singleness is mentioned elsewhere by Paul, as something that has its own advantages, something that leads a person to have, in the way that they don't have responsibilities, as in a family life, as in a marriage setting, they are able to give more concentration to the things of God, for example.

So, singleness is important in its own right. It's not something to be treated as an aberration, although it's an exception to the marriage relationship and to the family relationship.

[10:15] But it has its own importance. We're saying just that in passing, but it's still nevertheless important to say so. But the family, as God's norm has established a family and family relationships, well, in the Bible you find that the norm of the family, as it's made up of husband, wife, and children, though sometimes, of course, there aren't children, that's the norm, that's the core unit of society.

And as that's the core unit for society, that's why it's important for us to appreciate that and to protect that and to promote that and to actually stand against every effort that's made to undermine it or to change that norm that God has set into something else, whether it's in terms of gender, whether it's in terms of same-sex marriage, whether it's in terms of other things that are themselves out of keeping with what God's Word sets before us, the norm of the family, like the norm of singleness, and the norm of marriage is God's norm.

And it's God's norm that is good for human life, for human society, individually and collectively. So, obedient children are in accordance with God's norm.

Obedience is as God has set it for this is right. So, your children, you children today have a huge advantage knowing the Gospel, knowing what the teaching of God's Word is, that this is in fact why you are called on to obey your parents because God is saying, this is right.

This is how I've established it. This is my standard. You do it out of love for me as well as love for your parents. And when he says, obey your parents, that actually means much more than that they just obey them in a kind of mechanical way.

[12:19] Remember the Lord Jesus Christ in Luke chapter 2. He is the supreme example of what it is for children to obey their parents. He was then 12 years of age.

Remember, they had gone to Jerusalem. He had gone along with Joseph and Mary, his mother, to Jerusalem at a particular festival time. And they had set out for home and hadn't realized that he wasn't with them.

There would be a large crowd, of course, difficult to keep sight of children. Maybe they thought he was with somebody else. In any case, when they realized that he wasn't with them, they made their way back and they found him in the temple.

And he was in the temple actually teaching experts in the law of God. the doctors of the law, the experts in the law. There he was answering their questions, teaching them these profound things out of the law of God.

Now he could do that because he's the son of God. Because it's his law for a start. And you remember that Mary, his mother, scolded him somewhat and said, was he not concerned that his father and herself had been anxious over him and been looking for him?

[13:30] And of course he replied, do you not realize that I must be about my father's business? By that he meant God the Father. And the remarkable thing is, you read, that he went home with them and was subject to them.

He was subject to them. The son of God, God himself, having come into this world in the person of Jesus Christ, taking our human nature to himself, becoming human, there he is in the twelve-year-old Jesus.

And that God-man, the son of God, is at that point said to have gone home and been subject to his parents, to obey his parents. Because you see, the Lord placed himself under God's norm.

He hadn't come into the world to stand outside of God's norm as if he was going to be an exception to it as a human being. No, he came to be born into a family.

He came to be raised as a child. He's twelve years of age and though he's able to dispute with the doctors of the law, he is still under the norm of obedience to his parents.

[14 : 42] Now, if Jesus Christ lived in that stage of his life in obedience to his parents, to Joseph, and to his human mother, Mary, that surely sets the benchmark for our obedience to our parents as well.

And if you go forward to 2 Timothy, which Paul wrote towards the end of his ministry, towards the end of his life, indeed, in this world, in chapter 3 of 2 Timothy, he speaks about things that will take place in the last days, as he puts it.

The last days mean the time between the ascension of Jesus and his return, when he will return. These are the last days, so we are actually in the last days.

It doesn't just mean the few years before Jesus comes, whenever that will be. It means from that point right through to his coming, the last days. What does he say? He says in the last days there will come times of difficulty.

Remember, he's counseling Timothy as somebody who's going to go on in his own ministry once Paul is gone. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.

[16 : 20] Avoid such people. Now, I've missed one out. In the middle of that list, you find this, disobedient to their parents. In other words, Paul was saying, the last days are going to be marked by disobedience to parents among other things.

So, what he's saying there is that disobedience to parents really is itself, when you find it widespread, it's really a mark of an ungodly society.

It's one of the marks among many that people have departed from the norms of God, that they're no longer subject to the law of God, the word of God, the standard of God.

They're lovers of self, as that passage put it. When you become a lover of yourself, you become a lover of your own opinions, and you put them above those of God. And Paul is saying to Timothy, take note of this.

That's what you're going to face in the last days. That's what we're facing today as well. It's not new, but it's not gone away. There are those who are disobedient to parents.

[17 : 32] What Paul is saying in Ephesians is, the church's children must seek to be different the church's children know better. The church's children have the advantage of knowing the gospel, knowing the teaching of God's word, knowing the advantage of being brought up in a gospel home.

Because of that, not only are they to be different to the children of the world, they are to be the alternative, the positive alternative to the children of the world.

They are to be themselves by their obedience to parents, among other things. An example to the children of the world. So today, children, there's an argument from God's norm for you.

Obedience to parents is right, God is saying. There's an argument, secondly, though, from God's law and His promise. And again, this involves the children to honor your father and mother.

This is the first commandment with a promise. Now you can see that from that, Paul is now going beyond the matter of mere obedience because more is required of us in relation to our parents than obedience.

[18 : 43] Obedience is right, but he's also saying, this is important, honor your father and your mother. It's not simply being in obedience to them, you have to honor them, you have to promote their honor, you have to show respect for them and indeed, when it comes to their own old age, you have to honor them by looking after them as far as possible until such time as, in some cases, of course, that becomes impossible.

And we need others to help with doing that. But in this case, he's saying, honor your father and mother. It means that you listen to your parents because they've been on the road longer than you have.

It means that they know best in the things of life as to how you are to think, how you are to act, what you are to say, how you are not to say things. So listen to your parents.

I don't think, especially as you come to your teenage years, that somehow or other your parents are out of touch with life. Well, they may be out of touch with what's the latest entry into the pop charts or whatever, but they're not out of touch with life and with the crucial issues of life, what is good and what is bad.

Listen to your parents. Mark what they're saying to you, especially when they're talking from their own experience of life. It's not honoring to them if you don't listen to them.

[20 : 10] It's not honoring to them if you think you know better than they do. Honor your parents. Again, as we'll see, it's in the Lord. But then he adds, for this is the first commandment with a promise.

Now, why does he say that and what does he mean by that? He's going back to the Ten Commandments, where you find the Fifth Commandment, Honor your father and mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God is giving you.

That's what Paul is picking up here, the Fifth Commandment. By the way, that itself shows us that because he's dealing with the Ten Commandments or one of them, and he's going back to that unit of the Ten Commandments, it really shows us that not obeying our parents or for parents to be abusive to children is a sin in the eyes of God.

It's a breaking of God's law. It's something for which we need to seek God's forgiveness. So when he's saying, obey your parents for this is right, now honor your father and mother, this is the first commandment, it is a commandment.

It is something that God requires of us. It is something that God has included in the moral laws, we put it in the Ten Commandments or the moral law as it's usually spoken of.

[21 : 23] But he's saying, this is the first commandment with a promise. Why is he saying the first commandment with a promise when it's actually the only commandment with a promise? When you look through the list of the Ten Commandments, as you have them there in Exodus chapter 20, when they were first given, you'll find as you go through them, the fifth commandment is actually the only commandment that has a promise attached to it.

The promise is that it will go well with them that they may live long in the land that God is giving to them, the land of Canaan in those days.

And now Paul is picking up that and saying that it may go well with you that you may live long in the land. So obviously it doesn't mean in the land of Canaan because that's not where the Ephesians were. There's something else to this more than just geographical or something that applied only to Israel and the people of Israel way back in those days of Moses.

What he really means is picking up the essence of the principle of the commandment is that this is a life that will truly be satisfying to you. It doesn't mean you live for a hundred years.

It doesn't mean you live a long life at all. But it means however long you live, this is the way to a satisfactory life for you as children to honor your parents, to live in a way that obeys them, that acknowledges with respect their parentage of you.

[22 : 48] And the privilege of having people such as your parents to bring you up in the ways of the Lord. In other words, this is the number one commandment in this sense, that it's the only one with a promise, and this promise attached to it.

You know, sometimes your children will come across this yourselves amongst your own age group and even as you go to school and as you go about various things, you know, come across the idea that the Ten Commandments are terribly old fashioned and out of date and really very restrictive. And that it would be far better for you just to do away with these things like the Ten Commandments or even the whole Bible itself and just live your life properly. Live your life in a way that really enjoys freedom from these things.

Well, you know this, if you want security in your life, if you want to feel really secure and be really secure, if you want to have a proper foundation on which you can feel secure, you have that in God's law.

God gave that to us so that we would have our security in obedience to himself. Once you're outside of obedience to yourself, whatever security you have in terms of your own thinking, in terms of what the world thinks, you have none in the presence of God.

[24 : 17] None whatsoever. Because God regards you when you've gone out with his law and rejected his law, and if, as people do, they just simply say that's no longer relevant to the society we live in, well, God has something against you.

And if God has something against us, we've got to deal with that as a matter of urgency. We've got to seek his forgiveness and approval, because every transgression of the law deserves his wrath and curse and judgment forever.

But he's provided Jesus for us. He's provided forgiveness for us. So that when we know ourselves to be sinners, breakers of his law, we find forgiveness and acceptance and security within Christ. But this law doesn't go away. It's still there as a framework that sets out God's standard God's norm for human life. And although we're not accepted by God because we obey God's law, we're accepted by God because of what Jesus has done, nevertheless, our acceptance by God does not do away with the law of God in every sense.

So this is the first commandment with promise. And when you children want satisfaction and contentment and security in your lives as you do, well, here's where you find it.

[25 : 46] In obeying your parents, for this is right. In honoring your father and mother, for this is God's commandment with a promise. So there's an argument from God's norm, this is right.

There's secondly an argument from God's law and promise, for this is the first commandment with promise. But thirdly, there's an argument, and now he's addressing fathers and parents in that included.

Fathers do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the nurture or discipline and instruction of the Lord. This is an argument from God's grace. You'll notice there in the first part of the first verse there, obey your parents in the Lord.

Now when he's addressing parents, bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. And you can see from that itself, how central the Lord Jesus Christ should be to your life personally and to your relationship with other people.

How central the Lord Jesus Christ should be in all our relationships. That's why when you come, as we began reading there at chapter 5, where he's applying all the various teachings and doctrines of this epistle up to that point, he comes there to address wives.

[27 : 01] He then comes to address husbands. And then as parents, he comes to address them in relation to their children. He comes to address the children themselves.

They're all part of what God through the apostle is addressing in terms of their relationships to each other. And all the way through that, you find in the Lord, of the Lord.

Jesus Christ is to be central to our lives individually and to our relationships in marriage, in parenthood, in children to parents relationships and in relationships out with that too.

There's the question for me today. Is Jesus central to my life? Is Jesus foundational to the life that I'm seeking to live? That's asking that more than just do I go to church every week?

Because it's possible to do that, good though that undoubtedly is, without having Jesus central in your life, without basing your life on Jesus, without availing yourself of the grace of God in him for your salvation, for your eternity, for your eternal security.

[28 : 17] That's the question for you too as well as for me today. Just because I'm standing in a pulpit and I have another minister behind me here who also stands in this pulpit. We can't come to this pulpit and simply say, this kind of question no longer applies to ourselves.

Is Jesus central to my life? Is Jesus central to what we're trying to do in preaching the gospel? What we're trying to be as pastors in the church of God? Is Jesus central to that?

He ought to be, he should be, he has to be. Otherwise, we're not fulfilling our place and our responsibility as we should. Is Jesus central, foundational in your life today?

Do you need to put things back in place if you've gone away from that or if that's never been the case? Is it not an occasion for you today to just take in what God is saying in a kindness and in a love and in a tactful way toward you?

And I hope I'm mirroring that and presenting this truth in his name. He has to be central, foundational. If our life is to be what it should. This is our chief end, isn't it?

[29 : 24] As the first catechism puts it. The chief purpose for why we were created, what is it? To glorify God and to enjoy him forever. Don't leave out the first part by focusing on the second part.

Don't be taken up with enjoyment of God at the expense of glorifying him. Don't leave the second part out either. God has created us to enjoy him.

To love communion with him. To be in fellowship with him. It's our greatest privilege of all. And so he's saying here to fathers, don't provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

You can see how that has a two-sided emphasis to it. There's the negative side, don't do this. And then there's the positive, but do this instead. What is he saying?

He's saying, don't provoke your children to anger. There's a whole lot in this that obviously haven't got time. I was concerned to speak a lot to the children today who are here, but this obviously is important as well.

[30 : 32] When he's saying, provoke not your children to anger, what he's saying essentially is, don't exasperate them. Don't discipline them or bring them up in such a way that makes them resentful, that makes them rebel, that makes them exasperated against the things of the gospel or the things of God.

When you're teaching them, explain to them what it is you're doing. When you come to discipline them, explain why you're doing this. Don't let your discipline be a selfish one.

Don't do it just for your own ends. We're all guilty of that as parents or grandparents that we actually carry out discipline when it's necessary as it sometimes is. But very often self is part of that, isn't it? So hard to keep self out of it. So hard to keep your own anger out of it, to keep your own selfish concerns out of it. And something else, listen to the child's case.

Don't just accept somebody else's word about your child. Remember a child once in school, coming home to their parents and saying the teacher had wanted the parents to go and meet with them because something had happened in the school where they were actually being badly behaved as it appeared.

[31 : 55] And when the child came home with that request from the school, let's just pause a wee moment. Thank you. Okay, this is our twinnies and our younger group.

And please don't regard that as an interruption. From what I was saying earlier, this is not an interruption. It's just an expression of what it means to belong to the church. They are part of the church already.

So it's not an interruption and it's great to see them coming to join the service at this point. So we're talking about how parents or how fathers here addressed us not provoking their children to anger but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

And one of the things I was saying there was to listen to them as well. Of course they don't always tell the truth. But sometimes they do even though it contradicts what other people say. And I was talking about the child who came home and said that the school wanted the parents to go and meet with the teacher because they had been misbehaving and had been reported by another people for doing so.

And so the parents went to the school to listen to what the teacher had to say and it sounded very convincing. And even though it was somewhat out of character when they came home to the child again, that child was scolded.

[33 : 44] And it ought not to have been scolded without first having been listened to. And it actually turned out the child was telling the truth. And these were actually stories that had been concocted.

There might have been an element of truth in them but they had been largely exaggerated and the teacher had accepted that and the child's own word had been dismissed. Now you can imagine how damaging that would be for a child and especially not being accepted by their parents first of all.

So listen to the child. If it happens they're not telling the truth, well fair enough but give them the opportunity to explain as part of the disciplinary process that we need to carry out with our children. So what he's saying here is bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Now this is, it's not just a conveying of words or truth by words, it's also setting an example to them.

And the general idea in that is really to bring a shape to their lives. Because it's the whole idea of training, the word is used there in the discipline and instruction, the training and instruction or nurture of the Lord.

[34 : 51] It's a training school. It's trying to bring a shape to their lives by conveying to them the Bible's teaching. That's essentially what it is.

And as you do that in the Lord and for the Lord, you pray that the Lord will bless that to the child.

And that as the child comes to grow up, as our children grow up in a family settings and in the church as well, they will come to appreciate the discipline and the instruction of the Lord.

They will come and turn out to be not generally of a good moral standing, good though that is, because this is more than just conveying to them a general morality, but that they will turn out to be righteous and holy children, children who will value being based on Jesus Christ and will come to themselves thank God for the instruction that they received from covenant parents and from being

part of the church of Jesus Christ in this life.

Let's just bow for prayer. Lord our God, we do thank you for the way in which we have so much of advantage in the gospel.

We thank you today for your ownership of the gospel and of the life of your people. We pray for grace as parents, grandparents and children and relatives to be what we should be in your sight and to be what we should be in relation to each other.

[36 : 31] Grant us then your blessing, we pray now in the remainder of the service. Continue with us for Jesus' sake. Amen. I'm going to sing some verses now from Psalm 115.

And this time it's on page 153 from Sing Psalms. We're seeing from verse 9.

Verses 9 to 11 is what you have in the bulletin. It should be 9 to 18. So if the presenter can please bear that in mind. It's verses 9 to 18 on page 153.

O house of Israel, place your trust upon the Lord alone. He is the mighty help and shield of all who are his own. To the end of verse 18 and we'll stand again to sing.

O house of Israel, place your trust upon the Lord alone.

[37 : 39] He is the mighty help and shield of all who are his own.

O eyes of Israel, trust the Lord. He is the help and shield.

All you who fear him, trust the Lord. He is your help and shield.

The Lord remembers Israel and he will bless us all.

The house of Israel and all who are his own. To fear him, great and small.

[38 : 44] May God the Lord make you increase both you and all your life.

May you be blessed by God who makes all things by whose design.

The highest heavens belong to God. The earth to us he gave.

It's not the dead who praise the Lord. They're silent in the grave.

But we exalt the Lord all night. His majesty proclaim.

[39 : 52] Both now and evermore exalte and praise his holy name.

Please be seated. Please both check all the **er fat** at Zorax 55 for 2-3 to lift. Couple 4 of the strength.

More love is to lift up your body variable. So you can leave the burden of life, ward the burden of self andaintop posing.

That would love looking for